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Did Kindschi say he'd lie under oath?

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The U.S. Attorney's Office said yesterday it is trying to find out if Jack Kindschi, former CIA station chief in Honolulu, really told lawyers he would lie under oath if a truthful answer would reveal Ronald Rewald was a covert agent.

The charge that Kindschi said he would lie was made March 14 in U.S. District Court by Rewald's attorney, Robert Smith.

Kindschi has emphatically denied Smith's charge, as has his attorney, Richard Griffith, who was present when the statement was supposed to have been made Aug. 16. They both say that Kindschi said only that, because of his secrecy oath with the CIA, he would decline to answer any question regarding CIA activity.

Now the U.S. attorney has sent a letter to Griffith asking him if Smith's statement is true.

Smith said the statement was made by Kindschi during an interview with himself and other attorneys for Rewald shortly after Bishop Baldwin Rewald Dillingham & Wong collapsed last August.

Smith, contacted yesterday, said the day after the meeting

he made a four-page memo on the session. He said the memo states that Kindschi admitted having been station chief in Hawaii and denied that Rewald was a covert agent, but "also admitted if Ron were, Kindschi would not be able to admit that; in other words, he would have to lie if asked that question."

Attorneys Brook Hart and Peter Wolff said yesterday they both were present at the meeting, also representing Rewald. They declined to comment on anything said then.

Wolff said the meeting probably was covered by attorney-client privilege and it also was his understanding that Griffith had offered to make Kindschi available for informal, off-the-record questions and what was said was for background information and would not later be repeated publicly.

Smith said his memo contains no reference to the meeting having been for background purposes only.

He said he has no interest in waiving any privilege Rewald still may have in his relationship with attorneys Hart and Wolff.

"It is not of interest to me at this point to try to marshal other witnesses who will support what I've said," Smith said.